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Senate

The Senate met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who locked the oceans in their vast reservoirs, we honor Your glorious Name.

Lord, Your power has sustained our Nation in the past, and we place our future in Your hands. Each day we are inspired by the splendor of Your holiness. We see Your handiwork in the glory of the sunrise and the majesty of the sunset.

Lord, continue to rule in the lives of our lawmakers. Do not turn a deaf ear to their prayers, as they seek to do Your will. Be for them their strength and shield during these challenging days. May they continue to find in You a future and a hope.

We pray in Your amazing Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 21, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNOCK thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday, Speaker PELOSI and I put in motion the path to pass a continuing resolution that in one fell swoop would accomplish four very important things. It would keep the government open through December 3 of this year and avoid a needless and dangerous shutdown. It would provide emergency funding to help resettle Afghan evacuees; it would approve tens of billions of dollars in disaster aid funding; and it will suspend the debt ceiling until December of 2022, commensurate with the time necessary to cover the debt of the bipartisan \$908 billion emergency COVID-relief bill passed at the end of last year.

Now, today, I want to spend some time focusing on the last of these items, addressing the debt limit to avoid a first-ever default in American history.

Throughout modern history, addressing the debt ceiling has consistently been done on a bipartisan basis. Let me repeat that. Throughout modern history, addressing the debt ceiling has consistently been done on a bipartisan basis. Since 1960, the debt ceiling has been raised approximately 80 times under both Republican and Democratic administrations and under both unified and divided government. So much for

the argument by Leader MCCONNELL that when all three branches are controlled by one party, the debt ceiling ought to be their exclusive domain. That is not what history has shown, and that is not what happened actually in 2017 when Donald Trump was President, MCCONNELL was majority leader, and MCCARTHY was Republican Speaker—I believe it was MCCARTHY back then—but the debt ceiling was renewed bipartisan.

To do otherwise, to not do the debt ceiling in a bipartisan way, has been considered unthinkable because the consequences for the economy, for the American people, and for our standing on the world stage would be too severe.

Senate Republicans and the Republican leader, however, are again engaging in fantastical feats of sophistry to justify why this time is somehow different. We know it is not. We all know the truth. Democrats and Republicans both had a hand in approving the spending we now must pay.

Look, we know the Republican justification for forcing a default is totally dishonest, plain and simple. Don't ask me; just listen to the Wall Street Journal. Here is what it said:

Congress would still need to raise the debt limit this fall even if no new major spending programs were enacted.

This idea that they don't want to raise the debt ceiling to deal with future spending is just totally false. Ask the Wall Street Journal.

The fact is, our continuing resolution would suspend the debt limit through December of 2022, an amount of time commensurate with the debt incurred as a result of passing the bipartisan \$908 billion emergency COVID relief legislation in December of last year. Remember, that legislation was drafted by Republicans, voted for by Republicans, and put on the floor by Leader MCCONNELL, who voted for it, and signed by a Republican President. Democrats worked with our colleagues to pass this bill because it was the right thing to do for our families, our

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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small businesses, and suffering communities.

Our CR is now carefully tailored—carefully tailored—to account for this debt. This is as reasonable as it gets. So for Republicans to suddenly throw their hands in the air and abscond from their responsibility to pay debt that they proudly supported is nothing short of a dine-and-dash of historic proportions.

Republicans racked trillions of dollars of debt under President Trump and are demanding American families foot the bill. What will this do? It could stop payments to Social Security recipients. It could stop payments to veterans. It could raise interest rates, making a mortgage or car loan more expensive. It could cause local governments to pay more in interest, and that might mean increased taxes for people. This is playing with fire. Playing games with the debt ceiling is playing with fire and putting it on the backs of the American people.

Of course, there is a very quick and easy way to make sure we avoid all of this from becoming even a possibility. Republicans simply don't have to vote to force a default. It is that simple.

Democrats will do the right thing and the responsible thing when the continuing resolution comes for a vote on the floor. We will see who among the Republican conference will do likewise.

NOMINATION OF ROHIT CHOPRA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, in addition to keeping our government open and maintaining our government's full faith and credit, Senate Democrats will also continue working this week on confirming even more of President Biden's nominees to the bench and to his administration.

For the information of my colleagues, later today, I will move to file a discharge petition on the nomination of Rohit Chopra to serve as Director of the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau. In the wake of the financial crisis of 2008, the CFPB was created under the Obama administration with a simple mandate: protect American consumers from predatory financial practices.

Rohit Chopra is the right man to lead this Agency after it languished under the Presidency of Donald Trump. Trump didn't really care about the average person being taken advantage of by the big financial institutions, despite his claim he is a working-class President. Mr. Chopra, on the other hand, has a long history of defending student loan borrowers from unscrupulous for-profit colleges and already served in the CFPB under President Obama, where he was defending the rights of middle-class people who might be taken advantage of by rapacious financial institutions. He has the experience; he has the dedication; and he will have the support of Senate Democrats when his nomination is

brought to the floor this afternoon or later this week.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, over the next few weeks, Senate Democrats will also move forward on a number of noncontroversial nominees critical to keeping our country safe and advancing American diplomacy abroad.

Over the last few months, there has been a growing backlog on these nominees due to Republican obstructionism, and it is our hope, starting this week, we can move to secure their confirmation.

But, last week, a number of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle announced they will seek to delay these nominees for no other reason than to score cheap political points in an effort to win fans on the far right. It is no secret. People leading this are all competing to run for President on the Republican side in 2024, and they are in feverish—feverish—pursuit of the extreme right in this country, which they think will help them win a primary. So they tie this Chamber in a knot but, more importantly, jeopardize the security of Americans.

This is unacceptable. Every one of these nominees won bipartisan, if not unanimous, support in committee. That same level of support should continue on the floor. The Republicans who are delaying the confirmation of these nominees are deliberately making the American people less safe—less safe on the foreign policy side, where we need nominees to the Defense and State Departments, and less safe on the domestic side as well, where there is talk of holding up U.S. attorneys who are in charge of prosecuting Federal laws in all the States.

Under normal circumstances, all of these nominees should be dispensed with speedily and without controversy, but because of the self-interest of a few obstructionists, the Senate could be forced to drag out what is normally a simple process.

I urge these colleagues to drop their theatrics immediately and allow these nominees to these critical Agencies to go through.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now a quick update on voting rights. Last week, several of my colleagues introduced the Freedom to Vote Act, a powerful new bill that would tackle head-on voter suppression, partisan gerrymandering, and the scourge of dark money.

The legislation also responds to recommendations from election officials and includes new provisions to boost confidence in our elections, including critical anti-election subversion reforms, a flexible voter ID standard, and commonsense voter list maintenance requirements. This legislation will promote greater confidence in our elec-

tions, and I believe all Senators—Democrat, Republican, and Independent alike—should support the package.

At the end of last week, I moved to place the Freedom to Vote Act on the legislative calendar, enabling me to schedule a vote on this bill in the immediate future.

This week, my colleague Senator MANCHIN, who helped craft this legislation and relied on many of the good practices in West Virginia to do so—Senator MANCHIN, this week, is making an effort, a good-faith effort, to reach colleagues on the other side of the aisle to win support of the Freedom to Vote Act, and, in fact, he has been meeting with a number of Republican colleagues.

We are committed to finding common ground, if there is common ground to be found. We look forward to hearing what changes Republicans might want to make. And if Republicans engage earnestly and honestly, we will work with them. The voting rights working group I convened earlier this year is prepared to help in that effort, but we need to move quickly. Time is of the essence.

As Senator MANCHIN said earlier this year regarding congressional action on voting rights, "Inaction is not an option." I agree with Senator MANCHIN in that regard.

To that end, it is my intention to hold a vote for the Freedom to Vote Act here on the Senate floor. If Republicans are unwilling to move forward, Democrats will have to move on our own. Inaction from Republicans on voting rights is not an excuse to do nothing. We are going to take action to make sure we protect our democracy and fight back against the disease of voter suppression, partisan gerrymandering, and election subversion that is metastasizing at the State level.

HAITI

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, and finally on Haiti, we have all seen these horrible images coming from our southern border as Haitian asylum seekers, simply looking to escape tyranny and the problems, that they have sought—have been met at our doorstep with unimaginable indignity.

Images of Haitian migrants being hit with whips and other forms of physical violence is completely unacceptable. This behavior must be addressed, and we must provide accountability. The images turn your stomach. It must be stopped, this kind of violence.

Right now, I am told there are four flights scheduled to deport these asylum seekers back to a country that cannot receive them. Such a decision defies common sense. It also defies common decency and what America is all about. Remember that lady in the harbor in the city in which I live.

So I urge President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas to immediately put a stop to these expulsions and to end this